

# ecoNews — Wire —

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

**April 25, 2003**

For immediate release

1. **Federal government to investigate vandalism of Maynard well house**
2. **Beach advisory posted at Backbone Lake; advisory remains at Lake Darling**
3. **Public meeting will highlight beach monitoring results for Backbone State Park**
4. **Quick action by manure applicator lessens environmental impact of manure spill**
5. **Wastewater bypasses in Hiawatha and Asbury**

## **FEDERAL GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE VANDALISM OF MAYNARD WELL HOUSE**

MANCHESTER — A federal criminal investigator from the U.S Environmental Protection Agency will follow-up on apparent vandalism at the town of Maynard's water supply April 18.

Although DNR tests showed no danger to the water supply, the people who did this placed themselves at risk physically and may be subject to criminal prosecution, said Kathy Lee, a specialist with the DNR's emergency response team.

"These water treatment chemicals are very dangerous when they are mixed improperly and vandals could potentially be killed by poisonous gases that are released," said Lee.

Federal, state and local officials are looking at these incidents much more seriously considering the homeland security issues that we now face, Lee said.

The Bioterrorism Act of June 2002 substantially increased penalties for tampering or threatening to tamper with a water supply. Fines have increased up to a maximum of \$1 million for actual tampering and up to \$100,000 for threatened or attempted tampering. Maximum prison times increased to 20 years for tampering and to 10 years for threatening to tamper.

The sheriff's office in Fayette County has not completed its investigation of the incident but indicated youths may have broken into the facility since a near-by park was also vandalized, said Ryan Stouder, an environmental specialist in the DNR Manchester field office.

Stouder tested chlorine samples from several sites in town, after Gary Reed, the water supply operator, found the door to the wellhouse open and the bulk chlorine tank empty.

“Gary Reed estimates that about 50 gallons of chlorine overflowed onto the ground after the vandals left a valve on the bulk tank open,” said Stouder.

The town’s water supply was drawn from a second well until equipment could be cleaned and chlorine and polyphosphate chemical additives could be replaced.

Stouder provided information on security issues that the town can use to prevent future incidents.

Lee said this incident underscores the need for security at all times. Although the recent emphasis has been on potential terrorist activities, the threats to drinking water safety can come from other sources, including vandalism. Even simple measures like limiting access to equipment, keeping doors and hatches locked, and fencing and lighting critical areas can go a long way to reduce vulnerability.

“Although this town isn’t required to do it, facilities serving populations of more than 3,301 are required by federal law to complete a security vulnerability assessment and an emergency response plan by the end of 2004 to protect against potential threats to their water supplies,” said Lee.

**For more information, contact Ryan Stouder at 563-927-2640 or Kathy Lee at 515-725-0384.**

###

## **BEACH ADVISORY POSTED AT BACKBONE LAKE; ADVISORY REMAINS AT LAKE DARLING**

DES MOINES — A swimming advisory for the beach at Backbone State Park in Delaware County has been posted and the existing advisory at Lake Darling State Park in Washington County remains in place.

Bacteria levels at Iowa’s 33 other state park beaches are within acceptable levels.

Signs warning the public that swimming is not recommended are posted at Lake Darling and Backbone Lake. People can still use the beaches there including for swimming, but the risk of bacterial infection or disease is considered to be higher because bacteria levels have exceeded the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guidelines for E. coli bacteria.

Weekly beach monitoring results are posted on the DNR’s website every Friday afternoon at <http://www.state.ia.us/dnr/organiza/ppd/beach2003.htm>.

**For more information, contact Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395 or Mary Skopec, 319-335-1575.**

###

## **PUBLIC MEETING WILL HIGHLIGHT BEACH MONITORING RESULTS FOR BACKBONE STATE PARK**

WATERLOO — A public meeting to share beach monitoring results from Backbone State Park will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 7, at the Franklin Hotel in Strawberry Point.

The DNR has done beach monitoring at Backbone Lake and other state parks for the past three years. Additional monitoring has been done at Backbone Lake in recent years to see if bacterial sources could be identified.

Beaches across Iowa exceeded U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended levels for bacteria only about 3 percent of the time during the summer of 2002, according to Boekhoff.

The DNR will present beach monitoring results for Backbone Lake and then receive questions and input from the public. The meeting is open to everyone.

**For more information, contact Janice Boekhoff at (319) 335-1574 or Kevin Baskins at (515) 281-8395.**

###

## **QUICK ACTION BY APPLICATOR LESSENS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF MANURE SPILL**

NEWKIRK — A manure applicator was able to successfully dam a small creek preventing most of the manure caused by a ruptured hose from reaching the Floyd River.

The spill occurred late Wednesday afternoon at the Hickory Hills Farms near Newkirk in Sioux County. Manure from the dairy operation was being land applied when the hose on application equipment split releasing an estimated 2,100 to 2,400 gallons of manure. The application was being made by Maple Leaf Environmental Management, Inc.

Within 15 minutes of the spill occurring and notification being made to the DNR, a dam was constructed on a small tributary of the Floyd River to stop the flow. The stream was then pumped dry three times behind the dam with the water/manure mixture being properly land applied on nearby fields. Crews worked into the early hours of Thursday morning pumping manure from the spill.

No dead fish were observed as a result of the spill.

“Water testing indicated that we may have had a small amount of manure get past the dam, but not enough to kill fish or impact the Floyd River. The quick reaction by people on the scene prevented this from being a much worse environmental problem than it could have been,” said Ken Hessenius, supervisor of the DNR’s field office in Spencer.

**For more information, contact Ken Hessenius or Gregory Olson at (712) 262-4177.**

###

## **WASTEWATER BYPASSES IN ASBURY AND HIAWATHA**

MANCHESTER – Equipment malfunctions caused wastewater bypasses in Asbury and Hiawatha last week.

Approximately 2,500 gallons of wastewater overflowed through a manhole when an Asbury lift station malfunctioned on April 22, running into an unnamed tributary of the Little Maquoketa River.

It took about one-half hour to fix the problem, but only liquids were released since the solid materials were retained in the collection system. Rainfall that night left the stream running full and diluted the discharge.

A plugged sewer line at the Oakbrook Mobile Home Park resulted in raw wastewater running across a parking lot and into Dry Creek in Hiawatha.

The release was reported late on April 18 and was stopped on Monday, April 21, after an investigation by the DNR Manchester field office.

The DNR was not able to estimate the amount of sewage released because of the unknown time span and the variations in flow during that time period.

The DNR does not anticipate a threat to aquatic life from either bypass.

**For more information, contact environmental specialists Doug Hawker (Asbury) or Sue Miller (Hiawatha) at the DNR Manchester field office at 563-927-2640.**